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ABSTRACT

This summary presents the findings from four regional workshops conducted as part of the Alaska School Finance Study. The purposes of the workshops, held in Bethel, Juneau, Fairbanks, and Anchorage, were to consider current and future methods of financing the public schools, to obtain citizen and local educational agency concerns and recommendations about school finance issues, and to identify additional topics for inclusion in the Alaska School Finance Study. Educators, state and local officials, and citizens attended the meetings and gave their opinions on a range of issues. A chart summarizes the problems, issues, opinions and the proposals, ideas, and positions expressed at each workshop site. (Author/IRT)

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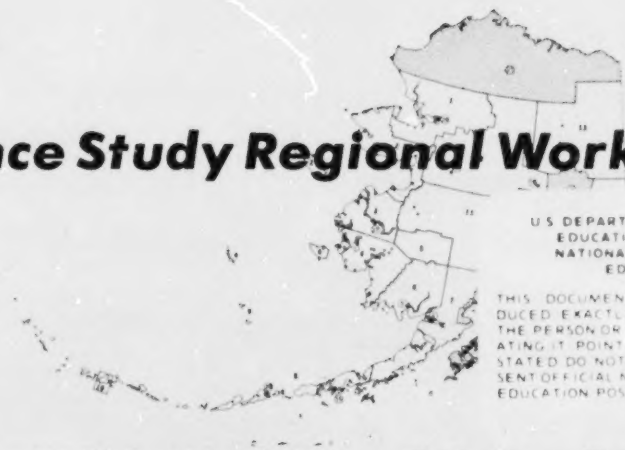
Summary of Findings

Alaska School Finance Study Regional Workshops

October - November 1976



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EA 009 235

THIS summary presents the findings from four regional workshops conducted as a part of the Alaska School Finance Study. The workshops were jointly sponsored and conducted by the Alaska Department of Education (DOE) and the Center for Northern Educational Research (CNER) as follows: Bethel, October 28-29; Juneau, November 4-5; Fairbanks, November 11-12; and Anchorage, November 18-19, 1976.

Purposes of Workshops

Purposes of the workshops were to consider current and future methods of financing the public schools, to obtain citizen and local education agency concerns and recommendations about school finance issues, and to identify additional topics for inclusion in the Alaska School Finance Study. The workshops were intended to augment the community involvement phase of the finance study.

Procedures

CNER and DOE worked cooperatively throughout all aspects of the workshops, beginning with planning activities and continuing through the implementation of the workshops. Four regional representatives assisted CNER and DOE in planning the workshops; in promoting attendance; in handling local workshop logistics; and in moderating the workshop sessions. These four persons were: Joerene Hout, Bethel; Marilyn Knapp, Juneau; Ron Inouye, Fairbanks; and Gordon Jackson, Anchorage.

Letters of invitation to attend the workshops were sent to all school superintendents, school board chairpeople, state and local government officials, state legislators, officers of teachers' associations, and other public and private agencies interested in education. A total of 166 persons attended the four workshops. Forty-six (46) of 52 school districts were represented by at least one person and many school districts sent two or more representatives. A total of 38 school superintendents and/or assistant superintendents; 11 other school district representatives; 53 school board members; 11 community school committee members; 5 State Board of Education members; 9 BIA school or agency representatives; one state legislator; two Borough Mayors; two Borough Assembly members; 15 state officials; 3 representatives from teachers' and principals' associations; and 17 interested community members attended the workshops.

During the one and one-half day workshops, the agenda primarily included activities which allowed participants to voice their concerns and to share their ideas. Based upon comments from participants in the Bethel workshop, CNER modified both written materials and procedures for the subsequent workshops to enhance opportunities for participants to express their views. However, workshop audiences also had the opportunity to view an audio-visual presentation about the current system of school finance in Alaska. The presentation highlighted sections of **School Finance in Alaska Report No. 1: An Overview of Current Issues, Sources, and Distribution of Funds for Public Elementary and Secondary Education**. The report, the first of the Alaska School Finance Study, served as the basic working document for all four workshops.

* * *

AGENDA
SCHOOL FINANCE REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

Registration

"Why Are We Here?" – Purposes of Workshop

"Local Concerns" – Presentations by Participants

"Financing Alaska's Schools: An Overview" – Audio-Visual Presentation followed by Question and Answer Period

Small Work Group Sessions (Choose one)

1 – Discuss strategies for "Defining Basic Need"
2 – Develop solutions to "Local Concerns"
3 – Plan and prioritize a "Basic Education"

Small Work Group Sessions (Choose another)

1 – Discuss strategies for "Defining Basic Need"
2 – Develop solutions to "Local Concerns"
3 – Plan and prioritize a "Basic Education"

Reports from each Small Work Group

Concluding Activities

SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS

From among the many varied concerns expressed by participants in the workshops, the following mini-summary highlights those issues which were raised in all four workshops:

1. There should be no efforts to radically change or to abandon the Public School Foundation Program (PSFP) as a funding method;
2. PSFP needs only minor modifications or "fine tuning";
3. Formula does not meet school costs; instructional program jeopardized;
4. Small elementary and secondary schools do not generate sufficient instructional units to support needed programs;
5. Validity, accuracy, equitability and amount of Instructional Unit Allotments (regional differentials) need review; and
6. Extreme operational costs often result from inheriting sub-standard or poorly designed facilities.

ORGANIZATION OF FINDINGS

Because the workshops were structured to obtain as much community comment as possible, it is appropriate to discuss these activities in depth. The following sections of this summary will present information about the process and results of: a) the general session and small work groups on local concerns; b) the small work groups on basic education; and c) the small work groups on basic need.

Seven major categories of concerns have been compiled from the issues voiced by participants. The first four categories reflect subject areas of significant concern to the participants and include Public School Foundation Program (I), School Construction (II), Equity (III), and Operation and Maintenance (IV). These categories appear in order based on the number of individual concerns expressed in each subject area. The remaining three categories – Other Financial Issues (V), Organization and Management Issues (VI), and Other (VII) – group together several subject areas which relate to the preceding four categories. The issues in these latter three categories were usually not voiced as often or as intensely as issues in the first four, but they do raise many important points about financing and operating schools. These categories also appear in order based on the number of individual concerns expressed in each subject area.

It should be noted that the term *local concerns* is used in this summary as it was interpreted by workshop participants: (1) to describe financing problems occurring within school districts; and (2) to offer opinions and observations about various school finance issues. Although many individual concerns have been consolidated here, considerable effort has been made to retain the original flavor and/or phrasing of both the concerns and the suggested solutions. However, every individual concern voiced and solution offered at each workshop may not appear in this summary.

Spirited discussion highlighted consideration of solutions to local concerns at the Juneau workshop. (All photos by Ron Inouye)

LOCAL CONCERNS

Procedures

As one of the purposes of these workshops was to obtain as much information as possible from participants, a major activity was a presentation session about local concerns by school district representatives. The comments were audio recorded and CNER/DOE staff took notes. The notes were summarized, typed, duplicated and distributed as a working paper for the subsequent small work groups to develop solutions to local concerns.

Work-group participants reviewed the working paper and selected concerns for intensive discussion. Group facilitators assisted the small work groups in focusing discussion on their prime concerns and in reaching a consensus on possible solutions. Frequently, because of the intensity of the discussion and a group feeling that it would rather concentrate on a few in depth, not all concerns were addressed.

Participants also completed individual worksheets on which they indicated concerns of particular interest to them (including those not discussed by the entire small work group), noted the type of local education agency to which the concern applied (city/borough, REAA, BIA) and suggested a possible solution(s) for each concern. The group consensus of solutions to particular local concerns was shared with the entire workshop during the final reporting session.

Juneau workshop participants prepare solutions to local concerns on individual summary sheets.

Summary of Concerns and Solutions

Local concerns and solutions presented by participants are summarized in tabular form on the fold-out section of this publication. Concerns are listed in the first column. The workshop(s) at which the concern was voiced appears in the middle columns. The third section of the summary indicates the various solutions suggested in one or more of the workshops.

BASIC EDUCATION

"What kind of education program should your schools offer?" Answers to this question were sought from workshop participants during the eight small work groups (two per workshop) about basic education. These work groups afforded people the opportunity to express their ideas about those "elements" which they felt constituted a basic education program to be offered by school districts.

Procedures

A three-step process was primarily used whereby individuals shared their recommendations in the work sessions. First, the small work group "brain-stormed," mentioning various elements which might be included in a basic education program. A group facilitator recorded these elements on a flip chart or blackboard for all group members to see. Groups usually listed about 50 different elements. In the second step, participants used an individual summary sheet on which they ranked in priority order those elements which they personally thought made up a basic education program for their school district. In addition, participants were asked to indicate the source of funding (local, state or federal) for each item on their summary sheet. The brainstorming list was available only for reference, and participants could add or delete from it according to individual preference. Finally, the group, with direction and assistance from the facilitator, in most cases, was able to develop a consensus based on certain elements which recurred on the individual summary sheets. The consensus from each group was shared with the entire workshop during the small group reporting session.

Concerns Expressed

Although most of the small work groups reached a consensus, all expressed concerns about prioritizing basic education elements. These concerns included:

1. A prioritized group list might not reflect community differences;
2. Such a list might lead to categorical funding;
3. A compilation of such elements for general distribution might destroy local option; and,
4. The Legislature might utilize such a list to legislate what basic education is; apportion funds accordingly; and, the result would be a State-run school system for all communities with little or no local option or control.

This last concern was repeated frequently throughout the basic education small work groups as well as being voiced during the local concerns segments of the workshops.

However, once these concerns had been voiced and discussed, most groups did formulate a group consensus. In some of the groups, the group ranking of elements was forced because all areas under consideration had a "high priority." One participant described this situation as "prioritizing under pressure."

Review of Individual Workshop Discussions

Each workshop was distinctive by the nature of its basic education work groups. In Bethel, one small work group pointed out that it was difficult to state whether the teaching of one program area was more important than the teaching of another area. However, that group stressed communication skills, practical math, social studies (with emphasis on local history and culture) and science along with health, physical, vocational and special education and the arts as "noticeable" areas of instruction. The other group stressed that administrative services along with plant operation and maintenance were "essential" for any program. This group indicated that communication skills, health, physical education and safety were among subject areas which should be taught. In both groups, efforts were made to discuss the type of student the schools should produce and to define the competencies for such students in order to provide direction for developing an appropriate educational program.

The Juneau workshop was characterized by the emphasis of both small work groups on the "3 R's" in the instructional program with equal importance accorded to plant facilities and staff. Physical education and sports, English, social science, health and safety, counseling and guidance and career/vocational education completed the elements for basic education. Education should help students reach both their individual levels of achievement as well as to attain to a certain level of achievement set by the state. In contrast to the other three workshops, in the Juneau workshop the idea that the state should outline basic education was expressed. However, it was suggested that each community should not be satisfied with just reaching the state minimums but should try to go beyond them and to seek to develop well-rounded individuals.

In Fairbanks, both small work groups actively participated in the basic education activities and were extremely productive in their results, both individually and as a group. One group, in seeking to determine a basic education program, extended itself beyond courses and services to discuss such issues as student self-concept, student self-identity, developing student vocational competence and person and society. In addition, the group emphasized reading, communications, computational skills, survival skills and lifetime learning skills among their priorities in education. Although these last elements bear the names of many traditional school subjects, the group used these terms to describe approaches to imparting many subjects to students. For example, reading included such diverse subjects as math, science, and Native language which could all be taught as part of a reading program. This group expanded beyond the bounds of traditional subjects to suggest groupings of subjects, experiences and events which would make learning vital and pertinent to students while developing their distinctive human endowments.

Subjects and activities which might be included in a "basic education" are suggested by participants at the Fairbanks workshop.

In Anchorage, one basic education work group fully participated in the group process; the other participated in the "brainstorming," completed their individual summary sheets, but declined to prioritize as a group the elements of a basic education program because of various concerns (see "Concerns Expressed" section). The other small work group which did reach a consensus about elements of a "Basic Education" program included these general groupings of subjects and services: survival skills; career education; student services; administrative services; science; and leisure activities.

Summary

In reviewing both the individual summary sheets and the group concensus from each of the eight small work groups, no perceivable trends or definite overall priorities for elements of a basic education program emerged. In fact, very little consistency in terminology to describe the suggested elements existed. These very situations emphasize the individuality of each Alaskan school district.

However, a number of *strong preferences* for elements of a basic education program were expressed. In at least three or four of the workshops one small group mentioned the following items as elements of a basic education program. These elements are arranged by category and are not in priority order.

A. General Goals
   1. Development of individual student competencies
   2. Development of a sense of identity in students
   3. Development of cultural awareness
   4. Development of "process skills" (how to think, reason, use own abilities, etc.)

B. Subject Areas or Educational Approaches
   1. Vocational Education
   2. Special Education
   3. Mathematics/Computational Skills
   4. Language Arts/Communication Skills
   5. Survival (in society) Skills
   6. Career Education
   7. Science (Natural and Physical)
   8. Social Science
   9. Art/Arts (Music, drama, etc.)
   10. Health and Safety (services and instruction)
   11. Leisure-time Activities and Skills
   12. Physical Education

C. Services
   1. Staff (administrative, teaching, other)
   2. Facilities/Equipment

Three participants at the Anchorage workshop list desired components of basic education for their local education agencies.

With regard to funding sources, participants concurred that State funding should be the main source of support for most elements. Reliance on Federal funding would be minimal and, if used, would support efforts to prepare students to function competently in society at large or to supplement on-going programs or services offered. Considerable support was expressed for some required locally-generated funding for education. Reasons for such a requirement included the community's sense of pride and commitment resulting from local financial support for education and the retention of local control of educational programs and services offered in the school.

BASIC NEED

Basic need, as used in the Public School Foundation Program (PSFP), is a sum of money. This sum of money for city and borough districts (obtained from state and local sources) and for Regional Education Attendance Areas (obtained from state sources) is the major resource used for current operating expenses in support of education programs for students. The sum for each district and REAA depends upon a number of factors – students, types of programs, school location – and is computed according to a formula in the PSFP law.

The computation of basic need is quite precise, and there is no disagreement on the method of computing the sum of money that is basic need. However, problems arise because of various interpretations and questions regarding the definition of basic need and use of those monies, which include:

1. Is basic need the basic *educational* need of the local education agency, or is it the basic *financial* need?
2. If the state should provide 100% of basic need in all

school districts, what would this imply, and what would it cost?

3. Why does the basic need sum of money support only 70% of current operating expenses in one district and 100% in another district?

4. Should the basic need sum of money be adequate to support a basic education program, and if so, what is the basic education program (in each district, or in the state)?

Because of these and other questions, the need for a strategy for defining basic need becomes apparent. The suggestions obtained at the regional workshops will be used to develop a strategy (one or more) and will be used in a report on this subject being prepared by CNER.

A feature of all workshops was opportunity for discussion of issues by small groups, as illustrated here in a scene from the Fairbanks workshop.

Procedures

The subject of basic need was introduced at each workshop through use of a preliminary discussion paper entitled "A Strategy for Defining Basic Need" which listed problems of definition, traced the historical use of the term, and examined the statutory elements of basic need as it is currently computed. This paper also listed some suggested criteria for a basic need definition as well as the roles that persons and agencies at local and state levels might take in developing a definition.

Consideration of basic need was not confined to the segment of the workshop specified for its discussion. The question of what is basic need also came up in every activity of each workshop. Therefore, suggestions and ideas concerning basic need are compiled from reports and comments.

Participants in the workshops responded to the problem of designing a strategy for defining basic need by providing full or partial answers to one or more of the following questions:

1. *Who* should define basic need?
2. *How* should basic need be defined?
3. *What* should be included in the definition of basic need?

Summary of Suggested Strategies

The strategies suggested by participants are listed below along with brief explanations of each.

1. *Leave basic need alone.* It is not necessary to find a definition when the PSFP is working well now, especially since any change in the way basic need is used could affect the operation of the PSFP, and possibly decrease the amount of dollars received by a district.

2. *Call basic need something else.* The "problem" is only semantic in nature so a solution would be to call basic need something else. Although there was no common agreement about what to substitute for the term basic need, the most prevalent suggestion was to call it *basic financial need.*

3. *Define what basic need is not.* This proposed strategy would involve identifying programs or resources which should not be included in a definition of basic need. The remainder of a district's curriculum offerings (or programs) or funds after such a process would constitute a basic need definition. Examples of things to "deduct" included the student transportation program, building maintenance and/or operations, food services, certain fixed charges such as insurance, and extraordinary costs associated with a district's location or circumstance such as regional cost differentials or intra-district cost differentials.

4. *Define basic need on basis of what is required.* This suggestion, with numerous variations, was made many times. It would involve identifying and analyzing every *requirement* for the conduct of education programs. Kinds of requirements to be analyzed include: (1) all applicable state laws and regulations; (2) state and federal judicial decisions; and (3) federal and state program directives. Examples of some specific requirements would be: (1) accreditation; (2) graduation; (3) safety and health; (4) special education; (5) minimum salaries; (6) department of education directives; and (7) local board of education duties (as specified in law or state regulation). Omitted from such a definition of basic need would be local discretionary programs or activities.

5. *Define basic need locally.* Whatever basic need is (basic *program* need?) it should be defined locally, i.e., within each district. Thus the basic need would be established based upon the needs of students and local community wishes. Such a method would validate local control of schools.

6. *Define basic need at the state level.* The suggestion of this strategy took two forms: (1) development of a minimum standard program (minimum necessary program, standard level of instruction program, etc.); or (2) development of state guidelines under which district standard program could be developed. Concern was expressed, however, that such minimums or standards for basic need might become permanent through legislative action, and might then become the maximum expected, depriving districts of the ability to respond to additional or different local needs.

EVALUATION

In keeping with CNER/DOE's desire to have workshop participants share their ideas and recommendations, pre-workshop and post-workshop evaluation questionnaires were completed by the groups. The questionnaires sought participant reaction to the workshop format and content as well as the school finance study in general.

Procedures

The brief pre-workshop questionnaire distributed at registration requested that participants indicate topics related to school finance of particular interest to them which they wanted included in the workshop. While the greatest number of responses (11) occurred in Anchorage, participants in Bethel, Juneau and Fairbanks also offered suggestions. Almost all of the topics mentioned on the pre-workshop questionnaires were voiced at the workshops during the "Local Concerns" presentation sessions and many of these were further discussed and solutions offered in the small work groups about local concerns. (See summary of "Local Concerns.") The post-workshop questionnaire was more extensive, asking participants five specific questions about both the workshop and the Alaska School Finance Study. Brief summaries of these written responses follow.

Suggested Follow-Up Activities

With regard to "follow-up" activities after the workshop, the overwhelming response from all workshops called for an *immediate report of workshop findings and recommendations* to be sent to all workshop participants, to school boards and to school superintendents. Other suggestions offered by participants for follow-up activities included:

1. *Keeping local school districts informed* about and involved in the Alaska School Finance Study in such ways as (a) CNER's meeting with school boards, superintendents and business managers to discuss the workshops and to obtain local community opinions and (b) CNER's requesting from each school district a written report about its goals, programs, services and limitations encountered in implementing these;

2. *Sponsoring additional workshops* for such purposes as informing state officials, legislators and other concerned groups about school finance, obtaining suggestions from local communities, discussing implementation of recommendations accepted statewide, obtaining legislators' responses to concerns expressed by participants and discussing issues and problems of small school districts without a tax base;

3. *Studying further actual costs of financing education in rural Alaska;* issuing reports about regional differentials (including detailed statistics and some models for adjusting differentials) for review prior to convening of the 1977 legislative session; and, defining and clarifying differences between basic need and basic education;

4. *Evaluating "local concerns"* stated and separating actual "concerns" from "selfish intents"; and,

5. *Presenting problems* stated *and* suggested *solutions to public* via newspapers, TV and/or radio.

Suggestions for and Reactions to the Alaska School Finance Study

In response to topics which should be addressed or included in the Alaska School Finance Study, participants indicated the following items which are listed in priority order based on frequency of response:

1. School operation and maintenance costs;
2. Capital construction and improvement;
3. Insurance; and
4. Teacher housing.
5. Other Topics:
   a. transportation;
   b. area differentials;
   c. insufficient funding to small districts;
   d. electrical costs in rural areas;
   e. food service and full state funding of hot lunch programs;
   f. base information about source of funds, amounts available and how funds are spent; and,
   g. equity of program received; equity of effort.

Reactions to the Alaska School Finance Study included the following comments:

1. Need more input from rural areas about "quality of education vs. basics";
2. Involve students, teachers, business managers and other school faculty members and community people in conduct of the study;
3. No sympathy or help is offered to problems of larger districts; recognize that not only REAAs have problems – all districts have, but the difference is in the "cut of the problem related to program and finance";
4. Collect data; "Let others (e.g., DOE, legislative branch) determine recommendations."

General comments about both the workshops and the study varied widely and offered such advice as the following:

General Comments

1. "Learned a good deal about school finance"; "Appreciate this chance for input";
2. "Worthwhile just trying to understand other districts' concerns – hope conclusion can be reached that will be workable for all Alaska districts";
3. "Revamp whole format"; "Last day was wasted"; "Perhaps a more complete, in-depth approach could have been added – for some, it may have been too simplistic"; and,
4. "Keep plugging"; "Hang in there – You're doing a great job."

SUMMARY OF LOCAL CONCERNS AND SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

LOCAL CONCERNS	Workshop Sites				SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS
Problems, issues, opinions...	Bethel	Juneau	Fairbanks	Anchorage	Proposals, ideas, positions...
I. PUBLIC SCHOOL FOUNDATION PROGRAM					**I. PUBLIC SCHOOL FOUNDATION PROGRAM**
A. General					**A. General**
1. There should be no efforts to radically change or to abandon the PSFP as a funding method.	B	J	F	A	1. The PSFP is serving most school districts well and should be kept.
2. PSFP needs only minor modifications or "fine tuning."	B	J	F	A	2. Modifications recommended. a. Reduce fiscal rigidity and categorical aspects, i.e., special education and vocational education. b. Include preschool program. c. Include bilingual program. d. Provide for cost differences *within* an LEA. e. Review annually to accommodate cost-of-living changes. *and* 2. Any changes made in PSFP should not infringe on the 1963 Borough Act regarding land sales and their derived revenues (almost solely used for education).
3. Formula could be simplified.	B				3. None suggested.
4. Formula does not meet school costs; instructional program jeopardized.	B	J	F	A	4. Develop formula using actual costs. *or* 4. Separate utilities, maintenance and food service from budgets and PSFP. *and/or* 4. Include weighted differentials in PSFP for secondary programs.
5. Money generated is almost equivalent of actual costs. Confusion at local level results without direction from state about how funds should be spent.		J			5. State should "interpret, dictate, or announce" what a fundamental education program is.
6. The term, "95% of basic need," is confusing and misleading, especially to local government units.		J	F		6. Discard *or* 6. Educate the public about the PSFP. Perhaps also require as part of teacher certification a demonstrated understanding of PSFP.
7. Amount of state aid is insufficient and must be supplemented by Federal funds.		J			7. None suggested.
B. Instructional Units					**B. Instructional Units**
1. ADM (average daily membership) use causes budgetary problems for small schools.	B		F	A	1. Use enrollment rather than ADM as basis for calculating instructional units.
2. Reporting and verifying FTE (full-time equivalent) ADM is a cumbersome process.		J			2. None suggested.
3. Small elementary and secondary schools do not generate sufficient instructional units to support needed programs.	B	J	F	A	3. Guaranteed floor (before current formula applied) should be based on one or more of the following:

					a. Base of 2 to 4 instructional units per school; b. Minimum dollars per pupil; c. Minimum dollars per school; and/or d. Minimum dollars per program.
4. Decline in ADM results in loss of instructional units.				A	4. Retain throughout year number of units used during fall (or from budgeting).
5. Loss of instructional units threatens continuous offering of programs.		J		A	5. None suggested.
6. Number of instructional units does not keep up with student population increases.		J			6. None suggested.
7. Instructional unit sometimes construed as a "teacher unit."		J			7. None suggested.
8. Funding computations for physically-close elementary schools causes loss of financial support.			F		8. None suggested.
C. Validity, accuracy, equitability, and amount of Instructional Unit Allotments (regional differentials) need review.	B	J	F	A	**C. Instructional Unit Allotments** Adjust according to isolation, transportation and communication problems and other delivery of education costs. *and/or* C. Increase based on following factors: 1. Inadequate facilities; 2. School lunch programs; 3. Maintenance costs; 4. Teacher housing; 5. Transportation costs; 6. Insurance; and/or 7. Activities. *and* C. Review PSFP differentials yearly and revise to reflect cost-of-living changes.
D. Local Revenues					**D. Local Revenues**
1. Local revenues required exceeds State share provided to district.			F		1. None suggested.
2. Difficult to raise revenues beyond required local share.			F		2. Needs review.
3. Municipal districts also have high educational costs, but local revenue potential limited.		J		A	3. None suggested.
4. Amount in lieu of local revenues provided to REAAs exceeds amount of local revenues available in individual cities and boroughs.		J	F	A	4. State provide same amount to cities and boroughs.
5. REAAs have no local revenue source.	B	J	F		5. None suggested.

REPORT NO. 1

Copies of **School Finance in Alaska Report No. 1: An Overview of Current Issues, Sources, and Distribution of Funds for Public Elementary and Secondary Education** are available at no cost for school and community groups or individuals. To obtain one or more copies, write:

Alaska School Finance Study
Center for Northern Educational Research
University of Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

or telephone Fairbanks 479-7143 or 479-7145.

LOCAL CONCERNS	Workshop Sites				SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS
Problems, issues, opinions...	Bethel	Juneau	Fairbanks	Anchorage	Proposals, ideas, positions...
II. SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION					**II. SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION**
A. School construction is too much in the political area.		J		A	A. Department of Education should conduct a statewide study to establish priorities for funding school construction.
B. There are extreme construction costs in isolated areas which will probably not decrease.	B		F		B. None suggested.
C. Inflation depletes bond issue funds for all school construction.	B		F		C. None suggested.
D. Current school construction system can result in any of the following, particularly REAAs:					D. All monies for school construction allocated to a district should be controlled locally. DOE should provide a State inspector to work in districts.
1. Building inappropriate for Alaska or for community;	B		J	A	*and*
2. Complex new facilities and equipment;	B				D. The planning and construction of school facilities should anticipate future enrollments and the provision of an adequate education.
3. Lack of standardized equipment within school district;	B				*and*
4. Inflated building costs;	B				D. System of checks and balances should be developed based on cost, timeliness and serviceability.
5. Constant frustration in dealing with Department of Public Works.	B				
E. Current financing for school construction.					E. Financing school construction.
1. Smaller municipal school districts cannot float school construction bonds;		J			1. Create Statewide pool (e.g., bank or state lending agency) available for small districts (particularly with small tax base) to borrow money for school construction.
2. Sufficient State funds are necessary to assist in school construction;		J			2- Share school construction costs equally throughout State by increased income tax or through increased support from State's general fund.
3. An equitable manner of funding capital construction is needed;			F	A	*and*
4. Bond issues have differing percentages of State support for municipal school districts and REAAs;	B	J		A	2- Establish capital construction formula similar to PSFP, based on need and ability to finance.
5. Municipal school districts want same system for support of school construction as REAAs;		J		A	
6. Rural areas do not have tax base;				A	
7. Consideration should be given those areas which have already bonded themselves.				A	7. Present 50% State reimbursement of district school construction should be increased while retaining local options.
III. EQUITY					**III. EQUITY**
A. "Equity refers to: (1) how funds for education are raised; and, (2) the spending of funds per child."		J			A. Both topics need to be addressed and solved.
					and
					A. Equity in school funding will have to come through greater State funding.
					and

		A. In an attempt to equalize the burden between REAAs and municipal school districts, new legislation might be required to permit taxation of private property in the REAAs.
B. Inequity exists between amount of local share raised and amount spent per pupil.	J	B. Revision in PSFP needed to correct for this situation.
C. Equity of programs offered needs consideration.	J	C, D, E. Value assessment of educational components is needed.
D. What do we define as being "equal"?	F	*and*
E. Less expensive programs should not necessarily be considered basic programs; look at the quality of the program being provided.	F	C, D, E. Maybe all education should be alternative education.
		and
		C, D, E. Need to emphasize quality rather than quantity.
F. Amount of money available directly affects the "quality" of education.	F	F. None suggested.
G. If district stays within budget, quality of education will probably be lower and school district may be judged as not capable of effectively operating programs.	F	G. None suggested.
H. "Inequity" exists in current funding system of REAAs: cities and boroughs pay for rural education through income tax (PSFP and "substituted local share") as well as paying for own local school district through property taxes and income tax (PSFP).	J F A	H. Need equal responsibility among all school districts to pay for education.
		and
		H. Cities and boroughs with tax base should not be "penalized" because other areas do not have tax base.
		and
		H. Minimum level of tax effort should be required where tax base exists.
		and
		H. Increase in PL 874 support would help in reducing local tax effort.
I. Methods of assessing property vary resulting in distortion of equalization feature of PSFP and inequities to taxpayers.	J	I. State should do all assessing.
J. Full (100%) State funding of education might diminish local control because of compliance with State requirements.	B J F	J. Local decision-making should be retained by school districts.
K. Not all large school districts are in great shape; they need help in responding to community pressures.	F A	K. None suggested.
L. Small districts cannot easily afford to "gear up" to level of large districts in order to meet needs and expectations of local community.	J	L. Provide additional financial support for administration in small high schools so superintendent does not have to teach full-time.
M. Should be no insistence that people pay for schools in areas with limited access to work and income.	J	M. None suggested.
N. Industries may not be taxed sufficiently.	J	N. None suggested.
O. Non-school related community responsibilities (e.g., public safety, local government assistance, teenage recreational programs) may affect "basic need" if not provided by other agencies.	B	O. None suggested.

LOCAL CONCERNS	Workshop Sites				SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS
Problems, issues, opinions...	Bethel	Juneau	Fairbanks	Anchorage	Proposals, ideas, positions...
IV. OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES					**IV. OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES**
A. Costs are unpredictable (e.g., freight, fuel, water, sewage, insurance, electricity), not controlled by district and not reflected in foundation program.	B		F	A	A. Annual review of PSFP to adjust for such cost-of-living changes.
B. Operation maintenance, and repair costs for machinery, equipment and facilities consume up to one-third of educational program budget.	B		F	A	B. Operation and maintenance costs should be fully State funded separate from educational budget. Foundation monies would then be adequate for educational program. *and* B. Build new facility; would be cheaper in long run.
C. Extreme operational costs often result from inheriting sub-standard or poorly designed facilities.	B	J	F	A	C. Before BIA facilities are assumed, some process should insure their being brought up to State standards.
D. Some new systems and facilities are too sophisticated.	B			A	D. Return to simple structures to decrease maintenance costs.
E. Ability to keep facility operating has become a criterion for hiring school principal; difficult to obtain maintenance staff in REAAs.			F		E. None suggested.
F. Inherited utility contracts (e.g., Alaska Village Electric Cooperative, Public Health Service) have resulted in REAAs subsidizing many non-school costs often at exorbitant rates.	B		F	A	F. State agency (other than REAA) should assume responsibility for providing electricity on contract at rates proportional to community's ability to pay. *and* F. State should assist with these "extra" costs.
G. Clarification is necessary about:					G. None suggested.
1. Responsibility for school maintenance in cities and boroughs;				A	
2. What is major or minor maintenance?				A	
H. Insurance costs are uncontrollable at local level.		J	F	A	H. Provide State self-insurance relief for all State agencies including school districts.
V. OTHER FINANCIAL ISSUES					**V. OTHER FINANCIAL ISSUES**
A. Categorical Aid					A. Categorical Aid
1. Such funding creates budgeting and management problems (specifically Vocational and Special Education):					1. School districts should receive all funds as lump sum to disperse as needed for programs and services.
a. Abundance of funds in some areas; shortage in others;			F		*and*
b. Available funds but no staff,			F		1. Maintenance and operation costs might be appropriate categorical aid.
c. Too many aides;			F		
d. Limits on flexibility in programming;		J	F	A	
e. No allowance for indirect costs to be charged against these funds.	B	J			
2. Categorical aid limits local control and decision-making.		J	F	A	2. Diminish or eliminate categorical aid.

3. Categorical aid programs have emerged because of interpretation and administration of enabling laws.	J		3. Re-interpret laws to allow LEAs to make decisions about and to administer these programs.
4. Categorical aid resulted because schools were not offering what community wanted.		A	4. Provide alternatives in school district programs.
5. Funding depends on grant-writing ability.		F A	5. None suggested.
6. Competition for categorical funding of required programs (e.g., bilingual) causes problems.		F	6. Include bilingual programs in PSFP.
7. Special Education "mainstreaming" increases school district costs.		A	7. Special Education should be handled locally and separately, but must be adequately funded.
8. There should probably be some categorical aid, but type is difficult to determine.		A	8. Maintenance and operation costs might be appropriate categorical aid.
B. Federal Programs			**B. Federal Programs**
1. Federal programs cost more than they may be worth: incredible amount of time-consuming paperwork and administrative costs which run almost as high as funds awarded.	B J		1. State should take responsibility for school district programs supported by Federal funds if such programs address important need(s) of district, such as math and science (Title I) or cultural activities (JOM or Indian Education).
2. Review process of applications for Federal funds may not be as fair as it could be.	J		2. None suggested.
3. Need clarification of amounts and authority of PL 874 (Federal impact funds).		F	3. None suggested.
C. Transportation, Travel and Support Programs			**C. Transportation, Travel and Support Programs**
1. Transportation concerns fall into two categories: student transportation and transportation of goods.			1. a & b. Better State funding is needed.
a. Student transportation is not included in the PSFP;		F	
b. Student transportation over 1.5 miles is fully State funded; hazardous routes only 50% State funded.		F	
c. Transportation costs of goods are inequitable and regional differentials do not approach these costs.		F A	c. Regional differentials should provide adequate and equitable coverage of these costs.
2. Travel expenses affect school costs in the following ways:			2. None suggested.
a. Travel expenses for community school committee members, school board members and superintendents are exorbitant, and yet a shortage of such funds may create a communications problem for and between these persons.		A	
b. Superintendents are required to travel excessively, costing the school district too much in terms of time and travel expenses.		F	
3. Support programs have (or may have) an impact on school district budgets as follows:			3.
a. Hot lunch programs are not included in PSFP and are being underwritten by instructional funds.	B	F	a. State should fund at 100%.
b. Interscholastic competition financial costs need to be addressed.		F	b. Determine whether interscholastic competition is part of basic education or is extracurricular.
c. Regional Resource Centers (RRC) are to be established.		F	c. RCC funding must provide adequate operating costs.
d. Boarding Home costs for housing and recreation programs may not be sufficient.	B		d. None suggested.

LOCAL CONCERNS	Workshop Sites				SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS
Problems, issues, opinions...	Bethel	Juneau	Fairbanks	Anchorage	Proposals, ideas, positions...
VI. ORGANIZATIONAL AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES					**VI. ORGANIZATIONAL AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES**
A. Personnel					**A. Personnel**
1. School districts want and need to be able to use skilled local people to instruct students.	B	J	F		1. Certification procedures need to be examined. *and* 1. Retain flexibility of foundation program to permit local decision-making about using local talent to offer special instruction or to augment on-going programs.
2. Difficult to learn what constitutes an approved vocational or special education program with regard to certification of staff.			F		2. None suggested.
3. Small secondary school programs must contend with inadequate teaching staff.			F		3. None suggested.
4. School districts need short-term help (e.g., personnel, materials) from outside the district.				A	4. Should be provided for through foundation program.
5. With regard to teacher salary negotiations:					
a. Pro's and con's of statewide negotiated teacher salaries with regional differentials should be considered;		J		A	5. a. Statewide teacher negotiations not favored nor recommended at this time.
b. Lack of local control of teacher salaries exists;			F		b. None suggested.
c. Need to curtail increase of salaries in negotiating process;		J			c. None suggested.
d. Teachers want salaries equivalent to State employees' salaries;		J			d. None suggested.
e. Current negotiations situations may result in requests that the Legislature establish teacher salaries and school costs.		J			e. None suggested.
f. Good pay for and high expectations from teachers do not insure the "education" of students.		J			f. None suggested.
6. Housing facilities for school staff affects attracting and retaining personnel.		J	F	A	6. School districts should not be in housing business. Long-term leases should be arranged. *and* 6. Staff housing should be established by State.
B. New Schools and Programs					**B. New Schools and Programs**
1. How does a school district offer good educational programs in small secondary schools?		J			1. Curriculum and teacher training for small secondary schools are necessary. *and* 1. Individuality of needs in small communities should not be lost in contrast to meeting needs of more populated areas.
2. Current funding system provides for operation of programs only.				A	2. Need planning funds for new mandated schools and programs.
3. Most communities want secondary programs but funds are lacking.				A	3. Need a guarantee of funds to start such programs. (See II, B, 3)

4. Finite State and local resources cannot meet high expectations of REAA communities for secondary programs.		A 4. More creativity in programs and delivery of programs is needed.
5. In new school areas, schools have unique relationship to community, partly because school district is sole employer in the area.		A 5. None suggested.
C. BIA Schools		**C. BIA Schools**
1. BIA villages are still uncertain and skeptical about role and authority of REAAs.	B	1. Workshops like this may help in transition.
2. BIA villages are worried about whether REAAs will be able to take over expensive BIA plants and to maintain educational programs within budgets provided by PSFP funds.	B	2. REAAs must have sufficient funds to take over operation of BIA schools at level to which local community has become accustomed.
3. Some BIA villages do not want to join REAAs because employees of BIA school will be affected.	B	3. None suggested.
D. Industrial Impact		**D. Industrial Impact**
Industrial impact causes problems for school districts.		A Create a separate State fund to provide "front money" to set up schools in such areas.
E. "REAA" Title		**E. "REAA" Title**
"REAA" title separates these local education agencies (LEA) from municipal school districts.	F	Eliminate "REAA" title and refer to all school districts with same title: "LEA" or "school district."
F. Small Cities		**F. Small Cities**
Cities of fewer than 400 people are not first-class cities and, therefore, are prevented from contributing local funds to schools.	F	This situation needs review to allow a local community to contribute to the school budget concerning programs and services for students.
VII. OTHER		**VII. OTHER**
A. Alaska School Finance Study (ASFS)		**A. Alaska School Finance Study (ASFS)**
1. ASFS is seen as positive step toward evaluating basic need and existing regional differentials.	F	1. None suggested.
2. ASFS will hopefully define actual operational costs for comparison with existing differentials.	F	2. None suggested.
3. As many experts as possible should be included in the ASFS.	F	3. Include Alaska School Business Officers' Association and like groups.
4. Goal of legislative change in 1977-78 is seen as too late.	F	4. Changes should occur before new legislature.
5. Will ASFS help or hinder the current financing system?	B J	5. None suggested.
B. High School Requirements		**B. High School Requirements**
1. Since students are not required to stay in school for 4 years to graduate, some school districts lose revenues and must cut programs.	J	1-2. High school requirements may need revamping.
2. Currently students are required to spend only a few hours per day in school.	J	

THANK YOU!

The Center for Northern Educational Research and the Alaska Department of Education wish to thank all those who attended the regional workshops. The compilation of local concerns and solutions and the results of small work group discussions have provided additional data vital to the conduct of the Alaska School Finance Study. The cooperation of participants in dealing with the school finance issues is appreciated.

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